

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

Hearing Date: April 21, 2021 8:00 AM

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COMMENTS FOR: HB 4322

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Lauren Gerken

Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

Austin, TX

Chair Cain and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 4322. My name is Lauren Gerken, and I am a Public Policy Analyst for the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD).

Established by state and federal law, TCDD is governed by 27 Governor-appointed board members, 60 percent of whom are individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) or family members of individuals with disabilities. The Council's purpose in law is to encourage policy change so that people with disabilities have opportunities to be fully included in their communities and exercise control over their own lives.

TCDD identified the following public policy priority for the 87th legislative session based on the needs and feedback of the disability community in Texas:

Ensure Texans with disabilities have equal access to voting by establishing more voting locations accessible to the community, considering proximity to bus routes and paratransit drop-off points, and publishing an absentee ballot application in an accessible format. Establish and maintain accountability measures for non-compliant voting locations and poll workers.

Unfortunately, the provisions of HB 4322 may create barriers for people with disabilities who are eligible to vote in Texas.

Many people with disabilities lack reliable transportation that can get them to the polls on election day. Even those who have public transportation available must rely on their counties to establish polling places in fully accessible locations within walking distance or rolling distance from a bus stop or other accessible transport drop-off points. Tents and other mobile voting locations offer counties the opportunity to ensure casting a ballot is accessible for these individuals when brick and mortar options are limited.

TCDD recommends that HB 4322 be revised to better protect the rights of voters with disabilities. We suggest that any language referring to the prohibition of using tents or other temporary or movable structures as voting locations be stricken from the bill. Tents and temporary structures established and monitored by the county in the same manner as a building-based polling place are ethical, efficient, and accessible options for everyone, particularly in rural areas and particularly people with disabilities. Losing these options will be detrimental to eligible voters who cannot get to or get in brick-and-mortar locations.

We appreciate the committee's continued efforts in ensuring election integrity and access for all eligible voters and for taking the time to consider the impact prohibiting temporary or movable voting locations will have on Texans with disabilities from all parties. As currently written, HB 4322 is not consistent with TCDD's mission and goals.

Thank you again for your time. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

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Rosie Darby

Self

Austin, TX

All voters should have a constitutional right to easy accessible voter locations

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shawn flanagan

self/retired

corpus christi, TX

vote yes Ends motor voting and other fraudulent practices.

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Jessie Carlson

self

Corpus Chrsiti, TX

Vote yes.

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Paula Clark

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Please vote FOR this bill

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Paula Kothmann

SELF

Austin, TX

NO MORE MINORITY RULE It's outrageous that government officials are trying to disenfranchise voters by limiting polling places to make them stand in line for hours. I DARE you to try to disenfranchise me. You need an law to protect people from those who try to prevent legitimate voters from voting. We saw how White Supremacists used this tactic in Georgia and we won't stand for it in Texas.

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Carla Birk

self

Leander, TX

I am writing in support of HB 4322. Curbside voting should be reserved for the special case of persons who are medically unable to enter the polling location. The polling locations are required to be ADA complaint. The election judge cannot oversee curbside voting. Typically a single clerk is taking the ballot, paperwork, etc. back and forth from inside the location to the curb. Due to the inability for the judge to monitor curbside voting for irregularities, including improper assistance, voting curbside (i.e. from a vehicle) should be a rare exception, especially since locations are required to be ADA compliant and ballot by mail options are available to cover physical disabilities and short term medical restrictions on the voter.

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RICHARD BOHNERT

self A/C contractor

COMFORT, TX

My name is Richard Bohnert. I live in Comfort, Texas Kerr county and I am in favor of HB 4322. Please pass this bill out of committee. Thank you.

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Bonnie Seelig

Self Retired

Spicewood, TX

Support: NO MOTOR VOTER for TEXAS. Good old Harris County can't miss a trick. During COVID a car full of people voting in a tight location where citizens didn't have the privacy of a vote or the security of the vote with wifi, phones, blue tooth and cameras in the car. With quick movements all over the city, where is the equal access to all citizens. Who kept track of when and where? Certainly the citizens of Harris County found it befuddling. Did they use the ice cream truck's music to let people know that they were in the area?

Certainly the integrity of the vote is worth more than a performance on the streets, or is it? The legislators will tell us at the end of this session.

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Virginia Sidrony

Self Fort Bend County VDVR

Sugar Land, TX

Chairman Cain, Vice-Chairman Gonzalez, and other Elections Committee members, my name is Virginia Sidrony. I am a long-time resident of Fort Bend County, and I am a constituent of Representative Jetton.

I am extremely concerned that some of these bills do not really have anything to do with "Voting Integrity", but actually have more to do with "Voter Suppression".

HB 4322 – Lines 7-15, page 1, and lines 3-7, page 2. An emergency, i.e., power failure, water leaks, etc., would incur large, additional costs for counties to rent building spaces instead of tents. Their CITIZENS would be required to pay for the much more expensive building rentals.

I sincerely hope this Committee will give careful consideration to my concerns,, as well as those of others, relative to this worrisome bill.

Thank you.

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Kathryn Williams

self/retired

Austin, TX

OPPOSED -- This bill, like dozens of others this legislative session, which is aimed solely at limiting local officials ability to respond to disasters and their effects on the enfranchisement, particularly among poor and people of color. It is part of a pattern at taking necessary flexibility away from local election officials. Before one passes such a bill, one should work in an elections office and as a poll worker.

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